



The Army Materiel
Command (AMC)

faces many changes and challenges—now and in the future. We are proudly supporting our Army at war, and while we are at war, the Army and AMC are changing to meet the demands of the future. Our many logistics challenges are complex, but the innovative character and professionalism of our soldiers, civilians and contractors will be crucial to making the Army a joint expeditionary force, more agile, more mobile and modular in structure.

Challenges and Change: Constant Companions for Army Logisticians



By Maj. Gen. Mitchell H. Stevenson

Dennis Steele

One of the many tasks following the end of high-intensity combat in Iraq has been the installation of add-on armor to several thousand Humvees.

While the Army is constantly changing, logisticians continue to do what they have always done. They do their wartime jobs every day whether the nation is at peace or at war. Maintainers, supply clerks, research scientists and engineers have the same missions every day—the only difference between peace and war is the pace and the intensity of those missions. Having to keep up with the constantly changing combat environment is one major challenge we faced in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), but we are professionals, and we are good at what we do.

The harsh weather conditions and the desert environment played havoc with our weapon systems as well as our personnel. They made routine maintenance anything but routine. The speed of the operations in Iraq and the distances across which we operated were unprecedented, and that, in and of itself, created challenges for resupply and for maintenance personnel. Our soldiers and civilians rose to the challenge as they have throughout our history.

Even though the major combat phase of operations in Iraq ended nearly one year ago, we have continued to face logistics challenges and demands that have surprised us, but we remain up to the challenge; we are learning, adapting, and getting better at what we do each day. It is an exciting time to be in the Army Materiel Command.

We planned long and hard for the conflict in Southwest Asia, but consumption levels of some items because of ex-



U.S. Army

tended operations and an enemy who has tried (but failed) to disrupt logistics operations presented new challenges and tested the resilience and creativity of all of our logisticians. Today, supply convoys are running parts, food, ammunition and equipment from Kuwait to all parts of Iraq—more than 1,400 trucks on the move every day—to meet demands of the mission to complete the task of delivering freedom to the Iraqi people. A similar effort is ongoing in Afghanistan.

Even as we meet the immediate demands of the continuing missions in Southwest Asia, AMC soldiers, civilians and contractors are supporting other national security missions across the globe and here at home. There are military personnel from all services in Africa, the Philippines and the Balkans, as well as in Europe and South Korea and numerous other locations around the world. AMC personnel are wherever our nation sends warfighters because AMC supports soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen.

Right now our soldiers are on the move, with the equivalent of five divisions leaving Iraq and four divisions moving in to replace them, a scope of movement our military has not seen since World War II. While supporting all this, we are resetting the equipment used in the war. All the equipment used in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom must be inspected, repaired, tested and certified—at the unit level, the installation level and some at the depot level. This invariably translates into a significant

MAJ. GEN. MITCHELL H. STEVENSON is the deputy chief of staff for Logistics and Operations, U.S. Army Materiel Command. He was the commanding general of the U.S. Army Ordnance Center and the commandant of the U.S. Army Ordnance Schools at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. He holds a master's degree in logistics management from the Florida Institute of Technology.



U.S. Army

AMC civilians are working in the field, going where soldiers go, to make sure our nation's warfighters have equipment of the highest quality.

demand for repair parts and other supplies as soldiers, civilians and contractors go about the task of bringing equipment back to "10-20" standards to be ready for the next fight. Soldiers and civilians at the unit and installation level are doing their jobs, and they expect the right parts to be there when they need them. At AMC, we anticipated those needs as much as one year ago, and put our requirements on contract to get the right materiel into the pipeline.

We are learning. We have gone to great lengths to capture our lessons learned so we will be even better next time than we were this time. Although we will be hard on ourselves, harder than any outsider could ever be because we know better than anyone what we did well and not so well, one thing must never be lost as we focus on our flaws—no other Army in the world could have achieved the successes that the U.S. Army has achieved, despite the many challenges it faced.

The changing nature of warfare itself presents challenges to Army logisticians. As we saw in Southwest Asia, our nation's warfighters will be facing the enemy in a more fluid, fast-paced battlespace. That means logistics units—more than ever—are responsible for their own safety and security. We logisticians in uniform have been reminded that we are soldiers first. This is not new, but as the soldiers who deliver supplies in Southwest Asia have learned, a logistics convoy is just as susceptible to an improvised explosive device attack as any other group of vehicles, and in



Dennis Steele

Mechanics of the 3-15 Infantry lower the engine of a Bradley fighting vehicle to service it before the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Reset—the Army's term for repairing equipment damaged in operations in Southwest Asia—is demanding, but the people at AMC are up to the task. Tanks, helicopters, Humvees and other equipment in need of repair beyond the capabilities of field units are being reworked at AMC depots.

some cases, may appear to be a more lucrative target. This means that we will have to redouble our efforts to strike a proper balance between doing our day-to-day logistics missions back in the continental United States and training hard to fight so we are ready when called upon. Soldiers need to be able to move, shoot and communicate with the same level of expertise they have when turning wrenches and filling requisitions.

A lesson some would say we relearned in OIF and OEF is that effective logistics depends on reliable, assured communications. Terrestrial-based systems across the distance involved in OIF and OEF will not work. Satellite communications systems are essential, and in fact, we have already gone to them in Southwest Asia, and they are paying off for us enormously. We now need to make them standard gear for logistics units, and train and operate with them in peace as we will in war.

At the more strategic level, AMC is transforming the way we do logistics. We have been working toward improved asset visibility through several programs. Using radio frequency tags on our shipments to Southwest Asia proved this technology can help, just as it did in the Balkans. We need to do more, however—much more. We need to also get better at distribution—managing it, maneuvering it, controlling it. AMC is currently participating



U.S. Army

in a Transportation Command initiative to provide the combatant commander a distribution operations center to tackle the myriad distribution challenges associated with lines of supply that stretch 13,000 miles from the continental United States to Southwest Asia. We need to become more agile in managing the supply chain, and we have undertaken a pilot project with the Defense Logistics Agency to incorporate our commercial suppliers into the supply-chain management process, feeding them our demand activity so they can have better knowledge of how we are using the supplies they provide us and therefore can be better postured to resupply us. We need to become better at theater opening, using our land-based and ship-based prepositioned stocks, to allow us to more rapidly respond to any scenario, anywhere. This is no longer your grandfather's AMC—we know that 20th-century logistics processes will not work—and so we are transforming into 21st-century logisticians.

Contractors are a key element of our logistics infrastructure. They do combat service support jobs to help AMC meet its commitments to our nation's warfighters.



U.S. Army

What does that mean—21st-century logistics? We do not exactly know yet, but we know what it is not. It is not just-in-time inventory control. That works for large retail organizations that are the envy of the commercial world. The Army's mission, however, is to fight and win the nation's wars and we know that what works in the commercial world will not always work for us. Unlike retailers and the personnel at major international delivery services, our soldiers, as well as civilians and contractors, face the dangers and stresses of combat while they deliver goods and services to our nation's warfighters. Ask any Fortune 500 company manager about the last time one of its stores relocated—he will break into a cold sweat. We relocate Army stores (we call them SSAs—supply support activities) as a



A soldier with the Stryker brigade combat team refuels his Stryker in the Iraqi desert.

Dennis Steele

matter of routine. Simply put, comparing our operations to commercial operations is not an apples to apples proposition. That does not mean we will not work smarter, continuously right-sizing our inventories. We are always looking for ways to improve how we get the right parts, and improved technology and equipment into the hands of the warfighter faster.

In addition, our laboratories and research and development centers at AMC are reinventing the way they invent and design things. To get the right technology and to reengineer parts to make them better and longer-lasting, they are working more closely with the user in the labs and in the field. We are developing new, inexpensive unmanned aerial vehicles to help soldiers see the enemy before the enemy sees them. Engineers are looking at ways to make parts for our current systems to make those systems work better and last longer. When Iraqi antitank weapons threatened our combat vehicles, AMC engineers designed, and our depot at Lima, Ohio, delivered, a new protective grid. The Humvee has become the vehicle of choice in our stabilization efforts for all of our soldiers. While they are fast and do the job, they are also thin-skinned. AMC depots are making armored doors to protect our soldiers, not only on Humvees, but on all of our wheeled

vehicles. Everything we are doing at AMC is warfighter-centric to help soldiers do their jobs better and more safely.

One of the ways we are transforming is with prepositioned stocks. This is not a new idea—we had several divisions' worth of prepositioned sets of materiel in Europe and exercised drawing those stocks for years through the Return of Forces to Germany exercises. At the end of the Cold War, we made the transition out of those large stocks of materiel in Europe to a more regionally based set of contingency stocks. We even had a brigade set of equipment, plus its sustainment and theater-opening stocks, afloat. That concept proved itself in OIF when we used our afloat stocks in war for the first time since creating them in the early 1990s. The concept worked magnificently. In fact, one

of the 3rd Infantry Division's brigades fought with that equipment all the way to Baghdad. It worked; in some cases, the soldiers said, the equipment was in better shape than the equipment they left behind at Fort Stewart, Ga.

We are now taking that concept and refining it to the conditions of a new geopolitical environment. New Army regional flotillas of four to five ships are being set up and prepositioned at critical locations

around the world. Each one will have a combat service support package, enough equipment for one brigade, sustainment stocks including ammunition, and humanitarian and disaster relief supplies. We will be able to react quickly to combat or humanitarian missions anywhere in the world. We are doing this now, rather than later, instead of resetting back to where we were. In fact, one of our guiding principles in the entire reset effort is that we will not reset one piece of equipment to how it was before. Instead, we will do something to improve each in some way, even if that only means adding a machine gun mount to the cab or mounting an installation kit that can accept our new battle-tracking computers. This is just one example of smart logistics for the future Army.

The role of logistics in the future Army will fundamentally remain the same. Logistics is not glamorous, but it is the great enabler of our nation's fighting force. The people who fix our weapon systems, make the ammunition, design new, life-saving equipment, develop new and better-tasting meals, find ways to get things to the battlefield faster, better and cheaper, will usually never make the headlines. They just make it possible for our nation's warfighters to do their jobs more safely and more effectively than any other fighting force in the world.

I am proud to be part of it.

